

## **Status of Virginia Medicaid's Management of COX – 2 Drugs**

As there continues to be market changes related to the COX – 2 drug class, this special notification has been posted to summarize Virginia Medicaid recent actions related to this drug class.

Following the market withdrawal of Vioxx in September 2004, the drug Bextra was voluntarily withdrawn from the market in April 2005. Prior to this announcement, Bextra was a non-preferred drug in the COX-2 drug class on the PDL and required prior authorization (PA) for coverage. Effective April 7<sup>th</sup>, prior authorizations are no longer granted for Bextra and it is not reimbursable by Virginia Medicaid. A mailing was distributed to both medical providers and recipients with recent Bextra claims to notify them of this change.

The only preferred drug in the COX-2 class is Celebrex, which continues to be reimbursed without PDL prior authorization. The clinical edit is currently still in place requiring patients under age 60 to try two Non-steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs) or have been identified with a designated co-morbid condition prior to approval of a COX-2 drug. These NSAIDs are covered in both prescription-strength and over the counter.

With the implementation of the COX-2 drug class on the PDL in July 2004 and under the direction of the Pharmacy and Therapeutics (P&T) Committee, the Department allowed patients under age 60 who were on COX-2 therapy between January and June 2004 to receive a one-year prior authorization to bypass both the clinical and PDL edits related to this class. All unexpired prior authorizations for these particular patients will terminate on June 30, 2005. After this date, these patients will need to receive a new prior authorization for the clinical edit to receive the preferred drug, Celebrex<sup>®</sup>. The recent mailing to medical providers also addressed the termination of these prior authorizations.

Finally, the P&T Committee allowed an exemption from the COX-2 clinical edit (step therapy) for recipients for over age 60. This exemption for the over 60 population will also expire on June 30, 2005; requiring all recipients to receive prior authorization based on the clinical edit. Long term care pharmacy providers will receive notification of this change.

If you have questions regarding these changes, please contact the First Health Services Clinical Call Center at **800-932-6648** (available 24 hours a day, seven days a week) for questions regarding PA requests, clinical edits, and the PDL.